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**TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
MARCH 7, 2008**

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on House Bill 5814, An Act Concerning Community Access Television. I urge the committee to amend this bill to require competitive video service providers to provide their customers with community access channels and CTN at a level of technical quality no less than the channels and CTN provided their programming to the competitive video service provider. Further, the consumer functional accessibility of such channels and CTN should be at least equal to what the competitive video service provider provides for broadcast channels.

ATT's U-Verse offers the promise and potential to enable real competition and consumer benefits for cable consumers -- but only if this technology must be provided on a level playing field with cable.

Currently, ATT is treating community access stations and Connecticut Television Network (CTN) as outcasts -- substantially degrading their signal and making consumers proceed through a two minute drill simply to access their community stations and CTN. With ATT, community access stations and CTN will be shown at a resolution of 240 lines of resolution -- substantially lower quality than regular broadcast channels shown on U-Verse. In contrast, cable is shown at 480 lines of resolution and HD television are shown at 720 or 1080 lines of resolution. As is clearly evident, ATT will show poor quality community access programming, turning off viewers and limiting the promise of local programming.

While ATT U-Verse provides easy consumer access to regular broadcast stations in a manner similar to cable, U-Verse places community access stations on a sidebar menu and requires viewers to proceed through a 90 second loading period. Since most people currently surf through community access channels, the ATT format will dramatically reduce community use of these channels.

This double standard starkly contravenes the General Assembly's clearly stated policy in Public Act 07-253. As stated by the legislation's sponsor in the House of Representatives, "we ensure that public access continues to thrive by requiring certified competitive video providers to carry all existing public access programming in every community."

I urge the committee to remain consistent with the stated policy of Public Act 07-253 and amend House Bill 5814 to clearly require equal quality and accessibility for community access stations and CTN.